

VZCZCXRO1118
RR RUEHDBU RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG
DE RUEHYE #0532/01 1201244
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 301244Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5428
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000532

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/PPD, EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958; N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [AM](#)

SUBJECT: ARMENIA: MEDIA REACTION TO HRR AMENDMENTS

(U) Sensitive but unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) On April 27, 28 almost all TV stations and five newspapers referred to the amendments made in the Human Rights Report (HRR) regarding Nagorno-Karabakh. Commentary from Armenian media outlets varied from critical to extremely critical, claiming that the last change made in the HRR called into question the U.S.'s impartial role in mediating the N-K conflict. The issue seems to be playing out, however, and thanks to the pace of other events here, could well be off the front pages by the end of the week. END SUMMARY.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAS ADMITTED ERROR

¶2. (SBU) Virtually all media outlets reported on the comments of Armenian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Vladimir Karapetian, who said, "Never mind, they (the State Department) will revise it again. The unserious approach towards this issue was evident from the start. Obviously, by making the first revision the State Department admitted to being wrong." The same opinion was expressed by Armenian President Robert Kocharian who said "Neither we, nor the lobbying groups can guarantee that such occurrences will not happen. But it is obvious, that the US Department of State, by changing the formulation two or three times, accepted that they had done something wrong. But you know, sometimes it is difficult to correct something in the moment. We complain, then Azerbaijan complains, then we will complain, afterwards Azerbaijan will have to complain. I think this is not the fault of the lobbying groups, and the fact that they started to change [the statement] means that there must have been a "misfire" within the system."

THEIR RESPONSE...

¶3. (SBU) In an opinion piece entitled, "Their Response...", opposition newspaper Aravot writes about what it considers the mishandling by the USG of the Human Rights Report and by the British Government with respect to the recent wiretapping of one of its diplomats in Yerevan. Regarding the HRR, the author writes that "the first impression is that the wording was changed in response to the sharp reaction of Baku. But one would be naove to think that they (the USG) were not expecting the Azerbaijani reaction when they changed the formulation the first time," implying that something more nefarious was at play.

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER STATE DEPARTMENT

¶4. (SBU) Azg, a center-right daily, published an article speculating

that the reversal gives rise to an impression that the United States does not know how to formulate its stance on Nagorno-Karabakh. The author of the article suggests that Armenia probably needs to ramp up its rhetoric. "If the Azerbaijani side can receive whatever it wants through blackmail, then can't Armenia refuse to continue peace negotiations, especially given the fact that, as an OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair country, the United States is unable to show parity and balance. In addition, if the previous formulation used in the report was wrong, then what is the logic of going back to it even in the face of Azerbaijan's "threat" that they would not participate in the bilateral security meeting in Washington. Is it better for the report to be wrong in order to ensure Azerbaijani participation? It is clear that the State Department needs to get its act together. Otherwise, the unbiased approach of the U.S.'s role in mediating the N-K conflict is called into question. In that case, Armenia should reject U.S. mediation."

ANOTHER "PROPAGANDA PREPARATION"

15. (SBU) Armenian daily Hayots Ashkhar, often critical of U.S. Embassy activities, condemns the U.S. State Department for the last amendment in the report, questioning whether the inclusion of the paragraph on Nagorno-Karabakh in the Human Rights Report of the U.S. State Department can be viewed separately from the Minsk Group negotiation and the mediation of the United States. The author opines that the Human Rights Report was not a place for the discussion of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. "From the beginning of the year, the United States and the organizations which it supports began the process of 'propaganda preparation' and it was obvious that in any document related to our country they were going to include several 'sour words.' The turmoil, which occurred as a result, will continue until the United States stops using the Nagorno Karabakh issue as a tool for solving its current political

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issues. They set a trap for pre-election Armenia or anti-Iranian Azerbaijan and then, after being caught in their own trap, they started chasing their shadow."

WAITING FOR NEW CHANGES

16. (SBU) Government-run daily Hayastani Hanrapetutiu carries critical comments stressing that the U.S. State Department puts itself in an uncomfortable situation by restoring the initial wording of the report. "Such behavior raises doubts about the standing of the country, the seriousness of the official political assessments and its unbiased approach towards peace negotiations." The article comments that after the appointment of Matthew Bryza as an OSCE mediator, these kind of incidents have become frequent. "He was the one who publicized the principles of the negotiation process last year but did not share them fully. Recently during a Voice of America program he publicized all the details of the negotiation. In an interview with Azertaj, Matthew Bryza 'made a number of love declarations' to Azerbaijan and only mentions in passing that the U.S. is an unbiased mediator. The question arises, can a diplomat so in love with Azerbaijan be unbiased?"

GODFREY